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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HAVANA 023515

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STATE DEPT FOR WHA/CCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/15/2016

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [CU](#)

SUBJECT: DISSIDENT DETAINED AFTER FAILING TO ANSWER SURVEY

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Buddy Williams for Reason 1.4(d).

¶1. (C) Summary: A recent incident involving Cuban dissident Niurka Brito Rivas illustrates how the Cuban regime sometimes attempts to incriminate its opponents in illegal activity. Brito spent three days in jail in October, without charges, after she failed to fill out a survey sent by her daughter's school that asked her to state her political affiliation. Identification with any political organization other than the Communist Party would likely prompt the GOC to jail Brito for "dangerousness," a statute carrying a sentence of up to four years. Brito's Catch-22 - fail to respond to the parental "survey" and spend a few days in jail, or answer it honestly and get convicted of dangerousness - shows the creative genius of the Cuban Government. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Niurka Brito Rivas, a former Communist Youth League member and part of the establishment, saw life take a dramatic turn in early 2005, a year after she became head of the Metropolitan Dairy Products Enterprise. Brito discovered massive corruption, including the siphoning of gas for deliveries and the under-filling of one-kilogram cans of powdered milk -- pilfering that she said raked in 1,200 USD a month for top executives. She reported the corruption to the Communist Party (CP) and was fired three days later. In July 2005, Brito briefed foreign reporters on her experience and infuriated the Cuban Government, whose enforcers pushed her down a flight of stairs, slashed her car tires repeatedly, denied her two children school lunches and warned Brito that she could lose custody. A State Security official made clear that this was payback for "showing the press the errors of the revolution."

FROM BAD TO WORSE  
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¶3. (C) The whistleblower's woes increased in January 2006 when her husband died following what she calls a botched colon-cancer operation. In May, unable to find work and desperate for money, Brito swapped her well-located, three-bedroom apartment for a ramshackle studio and, under the table, 11,000 USD, money now keeping her household afloat. In mid-October, Brito's 10-year-old daughter, Camila, returned from school with a survey that asked her guardian to identify, among other things, the guardian's political affiliation and "economic situation." Brito visited the school and asked administrators if any other parent was being surveyed, and they said no. Brito decided not to respond to the survey, knowing she could get in trouble for either identifying a political organization other than the CP, or stating the true source of her family's money.

#### SUMMONED TO POLICE STATION

14. (C) On October 17, Brito was summoned to a police station in Havana's Chinatown and, without explanation, jailed for three days. She spent part of that time alone and part with one other cellmate, a woman apparently held on drug charges. On October 19, a police officer removed Brito from the cell and told her, "That big mouth of yours is going to be the death of you." Brito was fined a token amount for "disrespecting authority" and allowed to head home.

#### ONGOING HARASSMENT

15. (C) For Brito, the incident represents just another form of harassment in an ongoing GOC campaign to make her life miserable for damaging the regime's image. The fine is nothing, she said, compared with the hassle of being summoned every month to appear before the local police chief "along with all the prostitutes." The GOC maintains an open dossier on Brito for "dangerousness," and at each monthly meeting, a member of the CP branch in Brito's neighborhood, and an official of Child Protective Services, inform the police chief about Brito's conduct. Any reported infraction would likely lead to Brito being prosecuted, convicted and jailed for dangerousness. Losing custody of her children could be another unfortunate consequence for Brito.

#### COMMENT

16. (C) Dissidents like Brito pay the price, suffering indignities large and small, for differing with the regime. Brito's Catch-22 - fill out the parental "survey" honestly and get convicted of "dangerousness," or reject the survey and spend a few days in jail - shows not only the creative

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genius of the GOC but the tightrope Cuban dissidents have to walk. Brito is lucky to have spent only three days in jail; according to the Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, at least 2,000 women are currently behind bars in Cuba for "dangerousness," in the absence of any crime.  
WILLIAMS